1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

262 pounds (about 455 kilograms) yearly. The aggregate diet of the tribe may be estimated also by assuming the population to comprise 300 full eaters, besides, say, 50 nurslings negligible in the computation; so that the annual consumption of the tribe may be reckoned at 300,000 pounds (136,000 kilograms), or 150 tons, of solid food. Accordingly the several constituents may be estimated, as shown in the accompanying table, in percentages of the total, in pounds aggregate and apiece for the eaters, and (so far as practicable) in units both aggregate and apiece; the weights of units being roughly averaged at 100 pounds (45 kilograms) for turtles, 12½ pounds (5.6 kilograms) for large land game, 450 pounds (about 200 kilograms) for stock, and 2 ounces (56.7 grams) for tunas.

[162]

Estimated annual dietary of the Seri tribe

Constituents	Per cent	Quantity		Units	
		Aggregate	Apiece	Aggregate	Apiece
		Pounds	*Pounds*		
Turtles	25	75,000	250	750	2½
Pelicans	5	15,000	50	1,200	4
Other water-fowl and eggs	2	24,000	80	.....	.....
Fish	15	45,000	150	.....	.....
Shellfish (except turtles)	10	30,000	100	.....	.....
Large land game	7	21,000	70	300	¼
Other land game	8	24,000	80	.....	.....
Stock	6	18,000	60	40	⅔
Tunas	9	27,000	90	216,000	720
Other vegetals	5	15,000	50	.....	.....
Miscellaneous	2	6,000	20	.....	.....
Total	100	300,000	1,000	.....	.....

Of course the constituents vary with temporary conditions; during "The Time of the Big Fish", practically all other sources of food were neglected until the providential supply was exhausted; during the decades of main subsistence on stolen stock it is probable that the consumption of other constituents, perhaps excepting the tunas, was proportionately reduced; and it is not improbable that during the warfare between Seri and Tepoka, described by Hardy, the consumption of turtles was materially diminished. Judging from the direct and indirect data and from general analogies, the least variable constituent is the cactus fruit, which probably fails but rarely and is so easily harvested as practically to supplant all other supplies during its season of a month or more. At the best, too, the quantitative estimates are nothing more than necessarily arbitrary approximations, based on incomplete inquiries and observations;[1] yet they are better than no estimates at all, and

[1] About 200 turtle-shells were noticed about the rancherias at Punta Tiburones and Isla Tiburon alone in 1895, all being less than two years old, as judged from the degree of weathering.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

462 ing field; though by far the greater part of their time is spent in listless lounging or heedless slumber under the incidental guard of roaming youths and toiling women. The matrons are the real workers in the tribal hive; they are normally alert and active, passing from one simple task to another, gathering flotsam food along the beach or preparing edibles in the shadow of the jacal, with an eye ever on material possessions and children; they frequently join in hunting excursions of considerable extent; they are the chief manufacturers of apparel, utensils, and tools; and the scions of Castilian caballeros are not infrequently staggered at the sight of half a dozen Seri women "milling" a band of horses, and at intervals leaping on one to kill it with their hupfs. The masculine drones are the more petted and courted by reason of their fewness, for during a century or two, at least, the women [162] [562] have far outnumbered their consorts—a disproportion doubtless tending in some respects toward the disintegration of the clan system and, reciprocally, toward the firmer union of the tribe.

[756] One of the most noteworthy extensions of feminine functions among the Seri is toward shamanism. So far as could be ascertained from Mashém and the associated matrons at Costa Rica, it is such beldams as Juana María who concoct the arrow "poison", compound both necromantic medicines and curative simples, cast spells on men and things, and even fabricate the stone arrowpoints and counterfeit cartridges; though unhappily the data are neither so full nor so decisive as desirable.[1]

562 623 Conformably with their prominence in proprietary affairs, the Seri matrons seem to exercise formal legislative and judicative functions; for not only do they hold their own councils for the arrangement of the domestic business of the rancherías, but they also participate prominently in the tribal councils (as explained by Mashém), and play important rôles in carrying out the decisions of such councils—as when they cooperate with war parties as decoys, or journey across their bounding desert to spy out the land of the enemy.

64 On the whole, it would appear that the clan organization of the Seri conforms closely with that characteristic of savagery elsewhere, especially among the American aborigines. The social unit is the maternal clan, organized in theory and faith in homage of a beast-god, though defined practically by the ocular consanguinity of birth from a common line of mothers; yet the several units are pretty definitely welded into [619] a tribal aggregate by common feelings, identical interests, and conjugal ties. The most distinctive features brought out by the incomplete 562 investigation are the somewhat exceptional manifestation of property-right in the females, the singularly strong sense of maternal relation, and the apparent prominence of females in shamanistic practices as well as in the tribal councils.

[1] The agency of the women in applying the arrow "poison" was noted by Hardy; cf. p. 256.

7: Marroquin E-5 (1955) 1957 NU31 Seri NU31

Geographical Distribution

The Seri Indians live in two small Indian villages on the coast of the Gulf of California, State of Sonora, Desemboque and Punta Chueca. From there they frequently go to Isla Tiburón in the Gulf of California. 131 [484]

Approximately 35 Seri families live in Desemboque and 16 in Punta Chueca. Only in the first of these two places are there five "yori" (mestizo) families. 162 [563]

Sanitary Problems

The Seris have no defense against certain diseases which, like measles and flu, they acquire in their relations with the "yoris"; these diseases cause many deaths among the Indians. According to the an- 164 731 [751]

[291] [854] [302]

Seri Indian woman of Desemboque, Sonora. *Photo Henriette Yurchenco.*

cient Seri Chico Romero, last Seri Governor, there was a great smallpox epidemic there about 1897 which caused the death of a third of the tribe which was living in Costa Rica, a small ranch on the coast of Sonora.

In 1955 measles appeared among the Seris, with a great number of victims, children and adults; the actions of the rural teacher Leo Sandoval, the Linguistic Eduardo Mosser and of the sanitation authorities of Hermosillo, succeeded in keeping the mortality rate down; nevertheless, the number of deaths reached 5% of the total native population. [165] [744]

7: Marroquin E-5 (1955) 1957 NU31 Seri NU31

way. Since the preparation of the drinks served to them is not very hygienic, they often produce severe gastro-intestinal upsets and even affect their vision.

Demographic Data

The following chart shows the population distribution by age groups:

SERI POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS AND SEXES
(as of December 31, 1955)

	Men	*Women*
Less than 1 year	4	3
From 1 to 5 years	10	11
From 6 to 10 years	15	12
From 11 to 15 years	15	16
From 16 to 20 years	13	14
From 21 to 25 years	4	1
From 26 to 30 years	7	15
From 31 to 35 years	16	13
From 36 to 40 years	5	2
From 41 to 45 years	2	2
From 46 to 50 years	3	6
From 51 to 55 years	5	5
From 56 to 60 years	—	—
From 61 to 65 years	4	2
From 66 to 70 years	1	2
From 71 to 75 years	—	3
From 76 to 80 years	—	1
From 81 to 85 years	2	—
From 86 to 90 years	—	—
From 91 to 95 years	1	—
Total	107	108

The pyramid of ages formed by the data of the above chart does not present the usual characteristics of a young community in full growth, as is common in the Indian villages; rather it is closer to the old communities, with predomination of the working age groups over the infant and old age groups.

Work

The population able to work can be calculated as that between 11 and 65 years of age; because even though they begin to work very early, the cycle of economic productivity is very long. Calculation of that population gives us the following figures:

POPULATION ABLE TO WORK
(between 11 and 65 years)

Men, 71 or 69%, of the masculine population.
Women, 76 or 70% of the feminine population.

We can add that, at least as far as the male population is concerned, the figure of 69% with a potential work capacity is equivalent, in general terms, to the percentage of the population economically active, since one of the singular characteristics of the Seri population is the fact that they constitute a community fully occupied: all the men of working age have a place set aside in the fishing activities; this is an advantageous position for increasing economic development of the tribe. With relation to the women the situation is not the same, since the majority of girls of marriageable age carry on very few productive activities; it could be said that economic responsibility begins with matrimony.

If it is true that all the Seri men are fishermen, it is also true that there is the beginning of some specialization of jobs, which are carried on complementing or as an accessory to the principal occupation. Thus we have among the men:

Carpenters, constructors of *piraguas* (a kind of canoe)	6
Medicine men	14
Farmers	2

And among the women:

Seamstresses	4
Farmers	1
Midwives	22

The relatively high number of medicine men and midwives should not be surprising; Seri popular medicine is very well known and depends principally on magical propitiation and since the magic powers are acquired in a variety of ways, including dreams, and the healing rites are, on the other hand, very simple, it is not strange that medicine men should abound. As for the midwives, it can be said that every woman who has undergone the experience of childbirth feels herself able to help at a birth; nevertheless, it is said that the more experienced women are those best able to take care of those giving birth.

Problems which should be attended to

In addition to the sanitary problem mentioned above, mention should also be made of the problem of agriculture, linked with the necessity for supplying food to an Indian population which since economically it depends principally on fishing, needs to complement its diet with agricultural products to achieve a better one. In close relation